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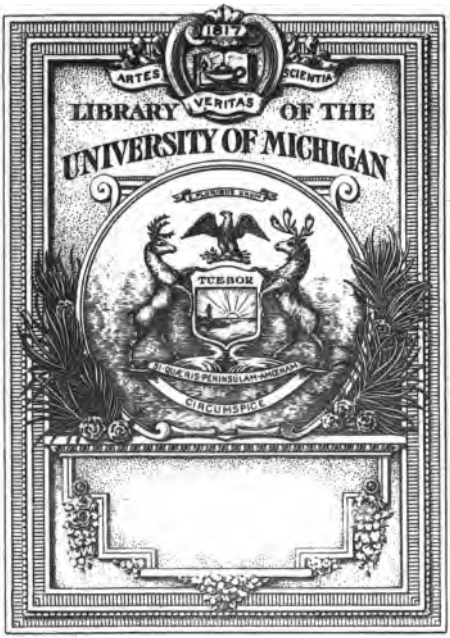

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THE WIDOW LEROUGE

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"Hush!" murmured Noel. "They must not take me alive."

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THE WIDOW LEROUGE

Translated from the French of

ÉMILE GABORIAU

Illustrated by

LOUISE L. HEUSTIS

Charles Scribner's Sons
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THE WIDOW LEROUGE

CHAPTER I.

On Thursday, the 6th of March, 1862, two days after Shrove Tuesday, five women of the village of Jonchère presented themselves at the bureau of police at Bougival.

They stated that for two days past no one had seen the Widow Lerouge,—one of their neighbors, who lived by herself in an isolated cottage. The house was shut up. Several persons had knocked without receiving an answer. The window-shutters as well as the door were closed; and it was impossible to obtain even a glimpse of the interior.

This state of affairs alarmed them. Apprehensive of a crime, or at the least an accident, they demanded the interference of justice to satisfy their doubts by forcing the door and entering the house.

Bougival is a quiet maritime village, its inhabitants principally boatmen, who ply upon the river. Trifling offences are sometimes heard of in its neighborhood, but crimes are rare.

The commissary of police at first refused to listen to the women, but their importunities fatigued him into compliance. He called into requisition the services of a

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